

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 1, 2022

HCPH Joins the Community to Stop HIV Together

December 1st is World AIDS Day

Houston – Harris County Public Health (HCPH) encourages our residents to #StopHIVTogether. December 1st is World AIDS Day – a day to come together with others around the world to prevent HIV, offer our support to people living with HIV, and remember those who have lost their lives to an HIV-related illness.

HIV, which stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, weakens a person's immune system by destroying cells that fight disease and infection.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2020, 30,635 people received an HIV diagnosis in the United States and dependent areas, which was a decrease of eight percent from 2016 to 2019. Also in 2020, in Harris County, 27,086 people were living with HIV; 921 of those people were diagnosed with HIV that same year.

HIV is spread through unprotected anal or vaginal sex and by sharing needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment. There is currently no effective cure for HIV, but with proper medical care, it can be controlled, and transmission can be prevented. Ways that HIV transmission can be prevented are through abstinence, using condoms during sexual intercourse, avoiding having multiple sex partners, never sharing needles with others, and the use of HIV prevention medicines such as PrEP and PEP.

When left untreated, people with HIV typically progress through three stages. The three stages are:

- Stage 1: Acute HIV Infection – people in this stage have large amounts of HIV in their blood and are very contagious and might show flu-like symptoms.
- Stage 2: Chronic HIV Infection – also called asymptomatic HIV infection, people may not show any symptoms or get sick but can still transmit HIV. For people who do not receive proper HIV treatment, this stage may last a decade or longer or may progress faster.
- Stage 3: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) – the most severe stage of HIV infection. People with AIDS can have a high viral load and can easily transmit HIV to others. They have badly damaged immune systems which increases the number of infections or other serious illnesses. Without proper HIV treatment, people with AIDS typically survive about three years.

Getting the proper HIV treatment can slow or prevent the progression of the disease. With advances in HIV treatment, progression to Stage 3 (AIDS) is less common today than in the early years of HIV. Today, scientific advances have been made in treatments for HIV, several laws have been passed to protect people living with HIV, and we understand so much more about the condition. Despite this, the stigma and discrimination remain a reality for many people living with HIV.

HCPH has an HIV/STI testing program – called Testing 123, that promotes a healthy quality of life by preventing HIV in Harris County. Through the **HIV Prevention Program**, we provide residents of Harris and Montgomery

HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.

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Counties with free preventive services such as PrEP, PEP, rapid testing, linkage to medical services, condoms, lubrication, and dental dams. Our clinic, located at 5815 Antoine Dr, Houston, TX, 77091, is open to the public and features STI testing and other clinical services.

Through our program, we aim to reduce stigma and provide residents with precise, non-judgmental, information regarding HIV and STI prevention. This World AIDS Day we want to remind all of you that HIV has not gone away. There is still a vital need to raise awareness, fight prejudice, and improve education.

For more information, please visit [HCPH's HIV Prevention Program website](#) or call 832-927-7350. For mobile rapid HIV/STD testing appointments, please text 281-962-8378.

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